

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
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AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 0786

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (YOUNG, ANDREW)
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S TRIP TO THE CARIBBEAN: SURINAM

1. THIS CABLE IS AN ATTEMPT TO GIVE A SUCCINCT ANALYSIS
AND APPRECIATION OF THE AUGUST 10-11 VISIT OF AMBASSADOR
YOUNG AND HIS PARTY TO SURINAM.

2. THE VISIT WAS A COURTESY CALL, IN THE SIMPLE AND BEST
MEANING OF THE WORD. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THIS COUNTRY
BECAME INDEPENDENT IN NOVEMBER, 1975, IT WAS INCLUDED IN THE
ITINERARY OF A HIGH-RANKING AMERICAN OFFICIAL ON AN IMPORTANT
MISSION TO THE AREA. SURINAM WAS RECOGNIZED AS HAVING
IMPORTANCE FOR THE UNITED STATES. WE SHOWED THAT WE WERE
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INTERESTED IN HAVING SURINAM BRIEFED BY ONE OF OUR TOP
OFFICIALS, AND PARTICULARLY ONE CLOSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER,
AND WE WERE INTERESTED IN HEARING FROM SURINAM LEADERS
WHAT THEY THOUGHT ABOUT THE POSITION OF THEIR COUNTRY AND
HOW IT WOULD FIT INTO THIS REGION AND HEMISPHERE IN THE
FUTURE. NEVER MIND THAT WE HAVE SUPPLIED EACH OTHER WITH
BRIEFING PAPERS IN WASHINGTON, NEW YORK AND PARAMARIBO BY

THE KILO IF NOT BY THE TON SAYING THE SAME THINGS, IT WAS OUR COURTESY IN HAVING THESE THINGS SAID BY AMBASSADOR YOUNG TO THEIR PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE, THAT GAVE THEM FACE, THAT MADE THEM FEEL THAT THEIR NATIONHOOD WAS APPRECIATED, THAT BROUGHT THEM THE KIND OF RECOGNITION WHICH THEY HAVE WANTED SO MUCH AND SO LONG, AND THE LACK OF WHICH THEY KEENLY FEEL SO OFTEN WHEN THEY SAY THEY ARE FROM SURINAM AND SOMEONE ASKS WHERE IS THAT.

3. AND WE GAVE THEM A CHANCE TO SHOW US THEIR COURTESY TOO. FROM THE MOMENT THE VISIT WAS PROPOSED TO THE PRIME MINISTER, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ALLOW NO THOUGHT THAT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WOULD GIVE THE RECEPTION FOR THE YOUNGS; THERE WOULD BE ONLY TIME FOR ONE AFFAIR, AND THAT WAS GOING TO BE DONE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF SURINAM. UNLESS THERE WAS SOMETHING LIKE THIS WHEN THE QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS LAST CAME HERE YEARS AGO, THERE HAS BEEN NOTHING LIKE THE MOTORCADES WE SAW THIS TIME, WITH MOTORCYCLES LEADING THE WAY EVERYWHERE THE YOUNGS WENT, AND AMERICAN AND SURINAM FLAGS FLYING. TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE, YOU HAVE TO REALIZE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER USUALLY DRIVES HIS OWN CAR WHEN HE GOES OUT FOR A DINNER IN THE EVENING, AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNTRY STANDS ON THE CURB WITH HIS WIFE WAITING FOR HIS CAR TO DRIVE UP AFTER A THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE, WITH NARY A MOTOR CYCLE NOR A POLICEMAN IN CONFIDENTIAL

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SIGHT. WHAT AMBASSADOR AND MRS. YOUNG SAW OF COURTESY AND PANOPLY HERE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN IMPRESSIVE BY COMPARISON WITH LATIN AMERICAN CAPITALS, BUT THIS IS NOT LATIN AMERICA, AND BY SURINAM STANDARDS IT WAS THE NICEST THEY COULD DO. AND THEY WERE GRATEFUL FOR THE CHANCE TO DO IT, AND TO SHOW THEIR RESPECT AND ESTEEM FOR THEIR GREAT NEIGHBOR TO THE NORTH.

4. BUT WHAT OF ALL THE POLICY DISCUSSIONS? WELL, THE BULK OF THE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE WAS IN PICTURES AND THE ARTICLES TENDED TO BE GREATLY SIMPLIFIED. TO TELL THE TRUTH, THE QUESTION OF THE PANAMA CANAL IS NOT A BURNING ONE IN SURINAM. THEY WANT TO SEE IT STAY OPEN, BUT BEYOND THAT THEY HAVE LITTLE INTEREST. THEY STRONGLY SUPPORT THE HUMAN RIGHTS POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES, BUT THERE'S NOTHING NEW IN THAT. THE FEW HEADLINES IN THE PAPERS CONCENTRATED ON AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S "ANNOUNCEMENT" THAT THE U.S. WAS NOT GOING TO BE A POLICEMAN IN THE AREA ANY MORE AND THAT SURINAM'S OWN EXPERIENCES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS COULD BE USEFUL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA. WE HAVE FOUND ONLY ONE EDITORIAL COMMENT, A SHORT ONE IN "THE WEST" OF AUGUST 12, WHICH WE WILL QUOTE IN FULL: "IN THE UNITED STATES, WHERE THEY ARE OFTEN NOT ENTHUSIASTIC

ABOUT THE STATEMENTS OF AMBASSADOR YOUNG, HE IS SOMETIMES CALLED 'MOTOR MOUTH' (SIC, IN ENGLISH). IN SURINAM, HOWEVER, HE SAID THINGS WHICH WERE DECIDEDLY NOT CRACK-BRAINED. HIS STATEMENTS WERE IN EVERY CASE POSITIVE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SURINAM."

5. FROM THE SURINAM POINT OF VIEW, THE VISIT CAME AT A SPECIAL TIME. THEY WERE, AND ARE, IN THE VERY MIDST OF A HARD-FOUGHT ELECTION CAMPAIGN, IN WHICH THE PARTIES WITHIN THE GOVERNING COALITION ARE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS AND THE OPPOSITION IS DOING ITS BEST TO AROUSE THE PEOPLE TO THROW THE GOVERNMENT OUT AS A BUNCH OF CROOKS AND INCOMPETENTS. FOR ONE NIGHT (AND MAYBE FOR JUST THAT ONE NIGHT), THEY ALL
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GOT TOGETHER WITH SMILES, BACKSLAPPING AND HANDSHAKING, AND IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE UNIFYING ELEMENT OF THEIR LIKING FOR THE U.S. THAT THIS WAS POSSIBLE. THE AMBASSADOR MADE A SPECIAL POINT OF PHONING THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION ON THE DAY OF THE RECEPTION, URGING HIM TO ATTEND AS HE MIGHT WELL OTHERWISE NOT HAVE DONE, AND (MIS)USING AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S NAME IN SAYING THAT HE WOULD BE VERY DISAPPOINTED IF THE MAN IN QUESTION DID NOT COME TO MEET HIM. THAT QUESTION ASIDE, WHATEVER THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS ON OCTOBER 31, THE U.S. CAN BE SURE OF A GOVERNMENT OF SURINAM THAT WILL BE SOLIDLY IN THE DEMOCRATIC CAMP.

6. IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE BASIC POPULATION IS DESCENDED FROM SLAVES AND THE LATER COMERS ARE ALSO ALMOST ALL DARK-SKINNED, IT WOULD BE EXPECTED THAT THE FACT THAT AMBASSADOR YOUNG IS BLACK WOULD PLAY A ROLE IN HIS RECEPTION AND IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE U.S. AS SEEN THROUGH HIM. NATURALLY THAT WAS A FACTOR, BUT IT WOULD BE A GREAT MISTAKE TO THINK THAT THAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THIS COUNTRY. SURINAM IS USED TO COLOR, ALL COLORS, AND WHAT IT SAW MOST IN MR. YOUNG (AND CERTAINLY IN MRS. YOUNG AS WELL) WAS THAT THEY WERE AMERICANS, AND REPRESENTATIVE AMERICANS, AND THAT THEY WERE SPEAKING FOR THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

7. IN A CABLE AFTER HE LEFT HERE, AMBASSADOR YOUNG THANKED THIS EMBASSY FOR DOING WHAT IT HAD DONE FOR HIM AND HIS PARTY IN SPITE OF OUR SMALL STAFF. WELL, THE STAFF MAY BE SMALL, BUT ANDY YOUNG'S VISIT MADE US FEEL TALL.

ZURHELLEN

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